

## ALLOWANCE

1956—

Mother was at work  
She gave me the responsibility  
of letting in the man from Sears  
who came to install storm windows  
He was handsome and friendly  
asked me to stay and talk with him  
while he worked  
asked me about school  
if I had a boyfriend  
Of course, I didn't have a boyfriend  
I was twelve  
He said I was pretty  
and sounded so sincere  
I felt pretty

When he finished working  
he asked if I'd help  
carry tools to the truck  
I was happy to  
He gave me pocket change  
said it was for helping...  
like an allowance

We walked from the house  
along the narrow sidewalk  
between the garage and the pines  
He told me I was nice  
and gave me more change  
Then he touched me  
over my blouse  
my white cotton blouse  
with pastel stripes  
I began to be afraid  
He gave me more change

I told him I was thirsty  
I'd get a drink  
and come right back  
He asked me to promise—  
gave me more change  
and said there'd be more, later

I wanted to run, but I didn't  
I wanted to yell, but I didn't  
I walked inside  
quickly locked the door  
and with trembling hands  
dialed a neighbor

After a few minutes  
he knocked—

When was I coming out?

Maude Carolan Pych

\*The above poem was originally published in the *Paterson Literary Review*.